

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

UNITED STATES AND WORLD CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12

TEACHER: LESSON 6(A)

THEME: FREEDOM ISN'T FREE

This lesson will lead to an examination of the milestones in suffrage history, which will include a timeline and student activities. Student Lesson 6(A) contains this same introduction; make enough copies for each student and distribute them. This reading lends itself to various reading styles. It is a good silent reading exercise. Or, one could choose instead to have students read silently while following the teacher who reads aloud, or soliciting students to read parts aloud while others follow along.

You should explain the word "suffrage" to students before they encounter it in their lesson.

INTRODUCTION:

These words should sound familiar: *"... that all men are created equal..."*, *"...certain unalienable rights..."* and *"...consent of the governed..."*

They are from our nation's birth certificate, the Declaration of Independence. Unfortunately, the noble ideals these words reflected were not put into practice when it came to voting. The right of suffrage was, at the very beginning, restricted to a few privileged white males. This injustice needed correction.

The Declaration has other words, words that speak about correcting injustices in our nation: *"...right of the people to alter or abolish it..."*, *"...despotism..."*, *"...to secure these rights..."* and *"...provide new guards for their future security."*

The history of our nation's growth and maturation as a democracy is an inspirational story of struggle and sacrifice by individuals and groups to *"...secure these rights..."*, especially the right to vote. They knew that without a voice in the decisions made, people are merely ruled, not governed by consent. Without universal suffrage, how can there be "rule by the people," ALL the people?

Examining the milestones of voting history is a journey that can only lead you to one conclusion: much was given by many that came before you so that YOU could have the option to cast your vote in, and for, the future. FREEDOM ISN'T FREE; someone paid for it. History often points out that our ancestors fought military battles in foreign lands so that our liberties might be protected. Indeed, this is true.

It is NO LESS true that our ancestors fought to "alter or abolish" unjust laws here at home so that the liberties of some, like voting, might be *"...liberty and justice for all"* as we say in the Pledge of Allegiance.

In the accompanying activities, students are invited to learn about and evaluate the efforts and accomplishments upon which our right to vote is based. Hopefully a sense of appreciation will result from this brief encounter with our past.